بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN DEFENSE OF

SAYYIDUNĀ AMĪR MUʿĀWIYAH

رضى الله عنه

A Sunni Response to Common Shīʿī Criticisms of the Companion, Scribe of Revelation, and First Umayyad Caliph

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Introduction

Among the Companions (Ṣaḥābah) of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, few figures have been as debated across sectarian lines as Sayyidunā Amīr Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān رضی الله عنه — the scribe of revelation, brother-in-law of the Prophet ﷺ through Sayyidatunā Umm Ḥabībah رضی الله عنها, governor of Syria, and founder of the Umayyad Caliphate. Within the Sunni tradition, he is honoured as a companion whom the Prophet ﷺ personally supplicated for by name, and whose later governance is remembered by many of the Companions themselves in terms of praise rather than condemnation.

This treatise sets out, from a Sunni Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʿah perspective, the traditional arguments in defense of Amīr Muʿāwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ against the criticisms most commonly raised in Shīʿī polemical literature. It draws on the reports found in classical Sunni collections of ḥadīth, history (tārīkh), and biography (siyar), as compiled in contemporary Sunni sources such as Dawat-e-Islami's biographical profile of Amīr Muʿāwiyah and its companion article on the praise he received from the Companions and later scholars.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that Shīʿī scholarship reads the same events differently, generally placing far greater weight on Muʿāwiyah's opposition to Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضی الله عنه at Ṣiffīn and on the conduct of his son Yazīd at Karbalāʾ. This treatise does not attempt to adjudicate that broader theological dispute; its purpose is to present, fully and fairly, the case that the Sunni tradition has historically made in Muʿāwiyah's favour, so that the reader understands the reasoning behind the Sunni position rather than merely its conclusion.

1. Lineage, Birth, and Companionship

Amīr Muʿāwiyah رضی الله عنه was born in Makkah roughly five years before the Prophet's ﷺ mission began. His father was Sayyidunā Abū Sufyān رضی الله عنه, a leading figure of Banū Umayyah — the second most prominent clan in Makkah after Banū Hāshim, the Prophet's ﷺ own clan — and his mother was Sayyidatunā Hind bint ʿUtbah رضی الله عنها, who embraced Islam at the conquest of Makkah and is remembered for her fluency in Arabic and her later participation in support of the Muslim armies at Yarmūk and al-Qādisiyyah.

According to the accounts preserved by Sunni biographers, Muʿāwiyah رضی الله عنه had privately accepted Islam before the conquest of Makkah in 8 AH, choosing — like Sayyidunā al-ʿAbbās رضی الله عنه — not to disclose it until he could openly

declare his faith in the Prophet's ﷺ presence. When he did so, alongside his father, the Prophet ﷺ received him with the greeting 'Marḥabā' (welcome).

From that point, Muʿāwiyah رضى الله عنه served among the scribes who recorded Qur'ānic revelation and the Prophet's ﷺ correspondence — a role of considerable trust, since it placed him in direct proximity to the text of revelation itself. Sunni scholars point to this closeness as one of several reasons his integrity deserves particular respect.

2. The Prophet's ﷺ Supplications for Muʿāwiyah

Central to the Sunni defense of Muʿāwiyah رضى الله عنه is a set of supplications (duʿāʾ) that Sunni ḥadīth compilers record the Prophet ﷺ having made for him by name. These are cited widely in Sunni biographical literature, including:

> *O Allah, make him one who guides and is rightly guided, and grant guidance to others through him.* (Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī, no. 3868)
>
> *O Allah, grant Muʿāwiyah knowledge of the Book and wisdom, and protect him from punishment.* (Majmaʿ al-Zawāʾid, no. 15917)
>
> *O Allah, grant him knowledge and forbearance.* (Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Kubrā, vol. 2)

Sunni scholars such as Imam Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī argue that a Prophetic supplication made for a member of his own nation, and especially for a Companion, is accepted by Allah — meaning that these duʿāʾs stand as a strong argument, within the Sunni framework, for Muʿāwiyah's good standing. Two further sayings frequently cited in his praise are the Prophet's ﷺ statement 'Muʿāwiyah, I am from you, and you are from me,' and the report that 'Allah and His Messenger love Muʿāwiyah.'

3. The Testimony of the Companions

Perhaps the strongest plank of the Sunni case is that many of the most senior Companions — including some closely associated with Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضى الله عنه during the very conflict that divides Sunni and Shīʿī assessments of Muʿāwiyah — are reported to have spoken of him with respect after the fact, rather than condemnation.

> *You speak of the dominance of Caesar and Chosroes even though you have Muʿāwiyah among you.* (Sayyidunā ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه, Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī, vol. 4)

> *Do not think Muʿāwiyah's governance is bad; by Allah, when he is no longer here, heads will fall like the fruit of a wild gourd.* (Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضى الله عنه, on returning from Ṣiffīn — Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah of al-Bayhaqī, vol. 6)
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> *Muʿāwiyah is a jurist (faqīh).* (Sayyidunā Ibn ʿAbbās رضى الله عنه, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 3765)
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> *I have not seen a greater commander after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ than Muʿāwiyah.* (Sayyidunā ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar رضى الله عنه, al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr, no. 13432)

Sunni scholars regard the statement attributed to ʿAlī رضى الله عنه as especially significant, arguing that if Muʿāwiyah's rule were purely a matter of illegitimate rebellion, his chief adversary would hardly be reported as speaking of his eventual departure from leadership as something to be feared rather than welcomed. Shīʿī scholars typically question the authenticity or context of this narration; Sunni scholars, by contrast, accept it as reliably transmitted.

4. Responding to Common Criticisms

4.1 The Conflict with Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضى الله عنه and Ṣiffīn

The most frequently raised objection concerns Muʿāwiyah's رضى الله عنه refusal to submit immediately to ʿAlī's رضى الله عنه caliphate and the resulting Battle of Ṣiffīn (37 AH). Sunni scholarship generally treats this as a tragic dispute between two mujtahids — each acting on his own sincere ijtihād — rather than as rebellion by a wrongdoer against a rightly guided leader. Muʿāwiyah's stated position was that, as governor of Syria and a relative of the slain Caliph ʿUthmān رضى الله عنه, he sought the identification and prosecution of ʿUthmān's killers before offering the pledge of allegiance. Sunni ḥadīth scholars such as Imam Bukhārī note that Ibn ʿAbbās رضى الله عنه instructed others, 'Do not say anything against Muʿāwiyah; he is the companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ' — read by Sunni scholars as evidence that even close allies of ʿAlī's household urged restraint in later judgement of him.

The Sunni position holds that both parties at Ṣiffīn are entitled to the benefit of the doubt reserved for the Companions as a class, and that a mujtahid who errs in ijtihād is not sinful but rewarded once for sincere effort, while one who reaches the correct conclusion is rewarded twice — a principle Sunni scholars apply symmetrically to ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah رضى الله عنهما.

4.2 The Adoption of Hereditary Succession and the Nomination of Yazīd

A second major criticism concerns Muʿāwiyah's رضى الله عنه decision to nominate his son Yazīd as his successor, a departure from the earlier practice of selection or

consultation (shūrā) among the Companions. Sunni scholars have historically treated this decision with more ambivalence than the question of Ṣiffīn itself; many acknowledge it as a consequential and debated political choice made in the interest of preserving unity after decades of civil strife, rather than treating it as proof of Muʿāwiyah's own personal corruption. Crucially, Sunni scholarship distinguishes sharply between Muʿāwiyah رضى الله عنه, a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ afforded the courtesy owed to that rank, and Yazīd, who was not a Companion and whose later conduct — particularly regarding the tragedy of Karbalāʾ — is not defended by mainstream Sunni scholars. Imam Ibn Kathīr and other Sunni historians openly criticise Yazīd's actions while maintaining respect for his father.

4.3 Allegations Regarding Sayyidunā al-Ḥasan رضى الله عنه

Shīʿī sources frequently allege that Muʿāwiyah رضى الله عنه was responsible for the death of Sayyidunā al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī رضى الله عنه by poisoning. Sunni scholars note that this claim rests on weak and disputed chains of transmission with no reliable, direct evidence implicating Muʿāwiyah personally, and that some narrations instead implicate other parties or record no attribution at all. In the absence of an authentically established chain, Sunni methodology holds that a Companion cannot be presumed guilty of so grave a crime.

4.4 Sincerity of Faith and Timing of Conversion

A further criticism holds that Muʿāwiyah's رضى الله عنه acceptance of Islam came late and was politically motivated. Sunni biographers respond that he privately embraced Islam before the conquest of Makkah, concealing it as some other early converts did, and that his subsequent record — as scribe of revelation, as a commander trusted with major campaigns, and as the recipient of the Prophet's ﷺ personal supplications — is inconsistent with mere opportunism. His close relation to the Prophet ﷺ by marriage, as brother of Sayyidatunā Umm Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها, is cited as a further sign of the Prophet's ﷺ trust in his household.

5. Character and Governance

Sunni biographical literature records Muʿāwiyah رضى الله عنه as a ruler noted for patience (ḥilm) even under provocation. One widely cited account describes him tolerating a man's harsh rebuke without retaliation, remarking that he 'felt shy of losing his tolerance' toward anyone under his authority. Another account describes him inviting an aggrieved elderly man to strike him gently, 'because I am also an elderly man like you.'

Sunni sources also record his continued respect for the Prophet's ﷺ household (Ahl al-Bayt) after Ṣiffīn: he is reported to have wept upon hearing a description of Sayyidunā ʿAlī's رضی اللہ عنہ virtues after his death, and to have sent regular gifts to Sayyidunā al-Ḥusayn رضی اللہ عنہ along with apologies that they were not yet sufficient. Such reports are presented by Sunni scholars as evidence against the portrayal of Muʿāwiyah as an enemy of the Prophet's ﷺ family.

Companions such as Sayyidunā Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and Sayyidunā Abū al-Dardāʾ رضی اللہ عنہما are recorded praising his judicial fairness and the precision of his prayer respectively, while later scholars such as Imam ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī warned that disrespecting Muʿāwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ — as a Companion — placed a person's own faith at risk, a position that reflects the broader Sunni doctrinal principle of withholding criticism from all the Companions collectively (ʿadālat al-ṣaḥābah).

6. Conclusion

The Sunni case for Amīr Muʿāwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ rests on four pillars: the Prophet's ﷺ own supplications for him, the testimony of senior Companions — including ʿAlī رضی اللہ عنہ himself — who spoke of him with respect, the weakness of the chains behind the most serious accusations against him, and the broader Sunni doctrinal commitment to honouring all the Companions as a class, reserving judgement on their disputes to Allah. On this basis, Sunni scholarship considers criticism of Muʿāwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ to be, at minimum, unproven, and in the view of many classical scholars, contrary to the honour owed to a companion of the Prophet ﷺ.

Readers should recognise that this represents the Sunni position specifically; Shīʿī scholarship reaches different conclusions from the same broad history, generally placing greater evidentiary weight on the accounts most critical of Muʿāwiyah and his line. This treatise has aimed to present the Sunni argument fully and fairly rather than to resolve that wider disagreement, which remains a genuine point of difference between the two traditions.

May Allah be pleased with Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān and with all the Companions of His Messenger ﷺ.

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